

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1696

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, PINS, PINT, IS, JO

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION ON WEST BANK

1. SUMMARY: PALESTINIANS ON WEST BANK AND IN EAST JERUSALEM HAVE HAD THEIR EXPECTATIONS STIRRED BY SERIES OF EVENTS WHICH THEY REGARD AS GENERALLY FAVORABLE: EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN RAPPROCHEMENT AT RIYADH AND CAIRO; END OF FIGHTING IN LEBANON; ADVENT OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION; US STAND IN SECURITY COUNCIL ON OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: AND REPORTS OF EARLY PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. WEST BANKERS HOPE THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND CURRENT TALK ABOUT RENEWED ME NEGOTIATIONS PRESAGE PROGRESS ON END TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEE PROBLEM. AT SAME TIME THEY ARE CONCERNED OVER PROSPECT EXCLUSION FROM ANTICIPATED PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING AND POSSIBILITY PARTIES TO CONFLICT (INCLUDING PLO) MAY MAKE DEAL AT THEIR EXPENSE. END SUMMARY.

2. WEST BANKERS AND EAST JERUSALEMITES (WHO COMPRISE LARGEST SINGLE BODY OF PALESTINIANS) HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION. TENSIONS ARE CLOSE TO THE SURFACE AND IT TAKES ONLY A RELATIVELY
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SMALL INCIDENT (SUCH AS OCCURRED AT ABRAHAM'S TOMB IN

HEBRON IN EARLY OCTOBER) TO SPARK VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND REPRESSIONS. CONTINUING ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, EXPROPRIATION OF LAND AND APPLICATION OF ISRAELI LAWS (SUCH AS THE VALUE ADDED TAX) REINFORCE DEEP SEATED PALESTINIAN SUSPICIONS THAT ISRAEL HAS NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING FROM WEST BANK TO SAY NOTHING OF MUCH MORE DIFFICULT AREA OF EAST JERUSALEM.

3. EARLIER THIS YEAR WEST BANKERS WERE DEEPLY DISTURBED WHEN SYRIA AND THE PLO WOUND ON ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND THEY FEARED THAT THE PLO, AS A POLITICAL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION, MIGHT HAVE TO LEAVE LEBANON AS IT ONCE HAD TO LEAVE JORDAN. EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE ACCOMMODATIONS REACHED AT THE RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMITS WERE WELCOMED BY WEST BANK PALESTINIANS SINCE THEY PERCEIVED REVIVAL OF ME NEGOTIATIONS DEPENDED ON, AT MINIMUM, SOMETHING RESEMBLING COMMON APPROACH BY CONFRONTATION STATES AND PLO PLUS END OF LEBANESE CONFLICT.

4. VAST MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS SUPPORT PLO. WHILE SOME VOICES PRIOR TO CAIRO SUMMIT WERE CRITICAL OF ARAFAT AND CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP FOR BECOMING EMBROILED IN LEBANON AGAINST SYRIA, WEST BANKERS PUBLICLY SUPPORTED PLO LEADERSHIP AND STILL DO AS THE SYMBOL OF THEIR ASPIRATION. WEST BANK-EAST JERUSALEM LEADERS ASSURE US THAT ARAFAT IS "REALISTIC" AND RECOGNIZES THAT A PALESTINIAN STATE CONSISTING OF WEST BANK AND GAZA COUPLED WITH TRICKLE OF RETURNING REFUGEES AND SIZEABLE COMPENSATION FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT RETURN IS MAXIMUM PALESTINIANS CAN HOPE TO OBTAIN IN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. AT SAME TIME, THEY OFFER VARIETY OF REASONS AS TO WHY ARAFAT CANNOT ADOPT SUCH A POSITION PUBLICLY AT PRESENT TIME.

5. WEST BANKERS NOW BELIEVE THERE IS A PROSPECT ME NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE RESUMED DURING FIRST HALF OF 1977. THIS INCREASES THEIR CONCERN THAT THE PNC MAY MEET WITHOUT THEIR BEING PRESENT. WE ARE TOLD THE WB MILITARY GOVERNOR HAS PASSED THE WORD THAT IF ANY WEST BANKERS ATTEND THE UPCOMING PNC (ASSUMING IT IS CONVENED), THEY WILL NOT BE

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PERMITTED TO RETURN HOME. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, WE HAVE REPORTS WEST BANK MAYORS ARE ATTEMPTING TO DRAFT A STATEMENT TO BE PRESENTED TO PNC. EVEN MORE WORRISOME TO THEM IS POSSIBILITY ARAB STATES, ISRAEL AND PLO MIGHT EVENTUALLY STRIKE A DEAL ON A FUTURE PALESTINIAN ENTITY AT THEIR EXPENSE AND WITHOUT THEIR HAVING BEEN SUITABLY REPRESENTED IN NEGOTIATIONS.

6. MOST WEST BANKERS CONTINUE TO SPEAK TO US IN EMOTIONAL TERMS ABOUT NECESSITY FOR A PALESTINIAN STATE WHICH WOULD GIVE PALESTINIANS EVERYWHERE A SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY. THEY PROFESS WILLINGNESS TO COEXIST PEACEFULLY WITH ISRAEL AND ACKNOWLEDGE ECONOMIC NECESSITY FOR TIES WITH JORDAN. (IN EFFECT, THIS MEANS ACCEPTANCE OF RESES 242 AND 338 INCLUDING ADEQUATE PROVISION FOR REFUGEES.) SOME WEST BANKERS CLAIM THEY AND PLO CAN NEVER BE FORMAL PARTY TO AGREEMENT THAT IN EFFECT, RENOUNCES PALESTINIANS' CLAIMS IN PRE-1967 ISRAEL.

7. ONLY A HANDFUL OF FORMER OFFICIALS DURING JORDANIAN TIMES HANKERS FOR A RETURN TO HASHEMITE RULE. SOME WEST BANKERS TALK ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF UN ADMINISTRATION FOR SEVERAL YEARS DURING WHICH TIME THOSE PALESTINIANS WHO WISH TO DO SO CAN RETURN, POLITICAL PARTIES CAN BE ORGANIZED AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS HELD. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY CERTAIN MODERATES WHO DO NOT WISH TO BE SADDLED WITH A RETURNING EMIGRE REGIME WHICH HAS HAD NO EXPERIENCE IN COPING WITH THE DIFFICULT ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS ON THE WEST BANK AND IN GAZA AND MANY OF WHOSE LEADERS DOD NOT HAVE FAMILY OR OTHER TIES IN THE WEST BANK-GAZA AREA. THE CHRISTIAN ARABS OF THE BETHLEHEM AREA HAVE ALSO FAVORED AN INTERIM UN ADMINISTRATION.

8. WEST BANKERS WERE HEARTENED BY THE RECENT US STAND IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. (THE MAYOR OF HEBRON TOOK THE UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF TELEPHONING THE CONSUL GENERAL TO EXPRESS THANKS AND THE MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM SENT A LETTER OF APPRECIATION TO AMBASSADOR TOON.) THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN ENCOURAGED BY STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT-ELECT AND SECRETARY-DESIGNATE WHICH THEY INTERPRET TO MEAN THAT THE US IS PREPARED TO MAKE A MAJOR

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EFFORT TO REVIVE ME NEGOTIATIONS EARLY DURING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

9. THE WEST BANK-EAST JERUSALEM AREA REMAINS A POLITICAL MOSAIC. THERE ARE THE TRADITIONAL CLANS, (THE MASRIS AND KANANIS OF NABLUS, THE NUSEIBEHIS OF JERUSALEM, QAWASMIS AND JA'ABARIS OF HEBRON) THE PLO AND PNF SYMPATHIZERS, PRO-HASHEMITES, BAATHISTS, AND THE COMMUNISTS. SINCE POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY ARE BANNED (EXCEPT FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS), THE ONLY WELL-ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUP ON THE WEST BANK ARE THE COMMUNISTS WHOM THE ISRAELIS TOLERATE BECAUSE THEY FOLLOW MOSCOW'S LEAD ON RESOLUTION 242. THE NEW WEST BANK MAYORS ARE FIRM IN THEIR DECLARATIONS THAT THEY DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ALTERNATE TO THE PLO LEADERSHIP. THIS IS ONE REASON WHY THERE IS NO SINGLE SPOKESMAN FOR THE WEST BANK.

10. COMMENT: ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS WEST BANK PARTICIPATION IN THE PNC, IF ACCURATE, APPEARS FROM HERE TO BE SHORSIGHTED. CURRENT WEST BANK LEADERS, IF PERMITTED TO ATTEND TO PNC, WOULD BE A MODERATING FORCE. IF WEST BANKERS DO NOT ATTEND THE PNC, IT WILL INTERESTING TO SEE IF WEST BANK MAYORS AND NOTABLES REACH AGREEMENT ON A DOCUMENT SETTING FORTH THEIR VIEWS.
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Message Attributes

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